



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 37.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 13, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' PRIZE! AND HOW THEY WON IT.

By HARRY MOORE.



Dick lifted the officer off his feet and raised him in the air. As the officer with the sword leaped forward, the youth hurled the unarmed officer through the air. His body struck that of his brother officer.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PRIZE.

General Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental army, sat in his room in his headquarters on the Hudson.

It was the last week in June, 1777.

General Washington had just been reading a message which had been brought by a special messenger, and his brows were knitted.

There was a frown on the face of the commander-in-chief.

Presently he called out:

“Orderly!”

The door opened almost instantly.

An orderly entered.

“You called, your excellency?” he asked.

“Yes. Send Dick Slater here at once.”

“Yes, your excellency.”

The orderly saluted and withdrew.

He was gone perhaps half an hour.

Then he returned, and, opening the door, announced:

“Dick Slater, your excellency.”

General Washington looked up.

He saw a handsome youth of perhaps nineteen years, who had entered the room as the orderly made his announcement.

This youth was Dick Slater.

He was the captain of a company of youths known as “The Liberty Boys of '76.”

This company of youths had done splendid work for the glorious cause during the year they had been in the patriot army.

In addition, Dick had made himself famous as a scout, messenger and spy.

He had earned the title of “the champion spy of the Revolution.”

He had earned it by hard and conscientious work—work in which his life had been placed in jeopardy in the most reckless manner imaginable.

Dick had taken chances, in order to secure valuable information, which no other spy had ever been known to take.

The commander-in-chief thought the world of Dick.

He appreciated the youth's work, and whenever he had any difficult work on hand he always sent for the youth.

It was safe to say that he had some dangerous and difficult work on hand now, else he would not have sent for Dick.

“Ah, Dick, good morning!” said the commander-in-chief.

“Good morning, your excellency,” replied the youth, quietly, and with respect.

At the same time Dick saluted.

General Washington indicated a chair.

“Be seated, Dick.”

The youth took the seat indicated.

The commander-in-chief took up the message which he had received, and again read it through.

As he read, a frown gathered on his face.

Dick, watching the great man, made up his mind that the contents of the letter did not please him.

He was right in his surmise.

Presently the commander-in-chief tossed the message down on the table in front of which he sat, and turned toward Dick.

“Dick,” said General Washington, “you have done a great deal of splendid work for me.”

The commander-in-chief paused and looked at the youth in a speculative manner.

“I have tried to do my duty,” said Dick, quietly.

“And you have succeeded—admirably!

Again the commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments, and then he said:

“Dick, are you ready to undertake an exceedingly dangerous and difficult undertaking?”

Dick nodded.

His eyes shone, eagerly.

“I am, your excellency!”

The answer was prompt and unhesitating.

The commander-in-chief smiled.

“You do not ask what the work is, before giving an answer,” he said.

Dick shook his head.

“No, indeed! It is sufficient for you to say you wish

something done. I will make the attempt to do it, and will succeed, if such a thing is possible."

"That is the way to talk, Dick! You are made of the right kind of material. The work which I have in mind, now, however, is somewhat out of the ordinary line, and it is exceedingly difficult and dangerous."

"It does not matter, sir; I will attempt it, whatever it may be, and if it can be done, I will do it."

"Good! I will tell you what the work is: As you know, the British have possession of New York and Newport?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"The commander at Newport is a—I was about to say man, but will tell the truth and say he is a brute, by the name of Prescott, Richard Prescott. His rule at Newport is an outrage on civilization."

Dick nodded.

"I have heard of him, and of the way things are going there, your excellency."

"No doubt; it has gone far and wide. Why, no citizen of Newport is safe in his own home. He is likely to be arrested and thrown into jail at any moment, and no reason given for the action. The British soldiers are encouraged in the work of plundering houses and doing all kinds of damage; ladies are insulted, and even struck. It is an outrage!"

The stern face of the commander-in-chief grew sterner still, and his eyes had a dangerous glint.

"It certainly is an outrage, your excellency," agreed Dick. "The commander ought to be strung up to a tree!"

"He deserves such a fate. And now, Dick, what I wish to do is to put a stop to such work."

Dick was silent.

He waited, expectantly.

He knew he would soon be enlightened.

General Washington took up the letter which he had tossed on the table.

"This is a message, giving the situation at Newport," he said; "the matter is thoroughly explained, and a number of the leading citizens ask that I try to put a stop to the high-handed proceedings of the British soldiers."

Dick bowed, and waited in silence for the commander-in-chief to continue.

He did so, presently.

"I have given the matter not a great deal of thought," General Washington said, in a slow, deliberate manner; "but it is patent that if this ruffian, Prescott, was removed from the position which he occupies as commander at Newport, things would be bettered, as his successor would probably be a man who would have some good qualities, at least."

Dick's eyes glowed.

An eager look was on his face.

"I think I see what it is that you wish done," he said; "you wish this man, Prescott, to be captured."

The commander-in-chief nodded assent.

"Yes, I wish you and your 'Liberty Boys' to make the attempt to capture this brute and bring him to me, prisoner. If you succeed in doing this, it will be a wonderful achievement, and although I know you are ready and willing, yes, eager to make the attempt, simply in the line of duty, yet, as it is an unusually dangerous and difficult undertaking, I am going to offer you a prize for work for as well. I am going to make you this offer. If you will capture this man, Prescott, and bring him to me, I will give you twenty pounds in gold, and write personal letter to Congress, calling attention to the work which you have done."

"Thank you," said Dick, "but the good will of our commander-in-chief is a sufficient prize for us to work for your excellency, and if we can win and retain that we shall be more than satisfied. I will say that we will make the attempt to capture this man Prescott, and will do so if such a thing is possible."

"Good! I do not know whether such a feat is possible of accomplishment, but if it is, I am sure you will succeed. I hope you may do so, at any rate."

"And so do I, your excellency."

General Washington now proceeded to give Dick all the information which he possessed, and such instructions as he thought necessary.

In the course of the talk he told of some of the things which Prescott was noted for. Among these he mentioned the fact that Prescott, when walking along the streets of Newport, made it a rule to force all Quakers to take off their hats to him. If one failed to do this he would seize the poor fellow by the throat and bump his head against a wall or side of a building, or he would strike the Quaker over the shoulders with a heavy, gnarled stick which he always carried.

This gave Dick an idea, and he made up his mind that when he started for Newport he would take a Quaker dress along, to use as a disguise when he should enter the city.

The commander-in-chief gave Dick only a few general instructions. For the rest, he left it to Dick's judgment.

"Manage the affair in your own way, my boy," he said; "you have good judgment, and things will likely come up which will make it necessary for you to use your own judgment, anyway."

"Very well, your excellency; but I will follow your instructions so far as is possible."

When the interview was at an end, Dick saluted and withdrew.

He went at once to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty boys."

There were nearly a hundred of the youths, and they were of an average age of nineteen years.

They were lively young fellows, full of life and energy.

"Hello, Dick! Where have you been?" asked Bob Estabrook, a handsome fellow of about Dick's size and build. Bob was Dick's especial friend and chum.

"I have been with the commander-in-chief, Bob."

"With the commander-in-chief, eh?"

"Yes."

"Did he send for you?"

There was an eager light in Bob's eyes.

The other youths looked interested and eager, also.

"Yes, he sent for me," replied Dick.

"What did he want, Dick?"

"What did he want?"

"Yes."

Dick smiled.

"You couldn't guess," he said.

"No, I suppose not; so tell us at once."

"Yes, do; that's a good fellow!"

"We're dying to know!"

"So we are, old man!"

Such were the exclamations of the youths.

Dick listened, with a smile, till all had finished, and then said:

"The commander-in-chief wishes us to go to Newport."

"To Newport!"

The exclamation was in a chorus.

"Yes."

"What does he want us to go there for?"

"To capture the commander."

"What!"

"To capture the commander."

"You don't mean it!"

"You must be joking!"

The youths were greatly surprised.

"Yes, I do mean it," said Dick, quietly. "General Washington wishes us to go to Newport and capture the commander there and bring him back here with us."

"Great guns!"

"Say, that promises to be something worth while!"

"That would be a big feather in our caps, wouldn't it?—go into the British stronghold and capture and carry away the British commander!"

The idea pleased the youths, though as yet they had no knowledge regarding why it was desired to do this.

"Who is the commander at Newport?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"Major-General Prescott."

"Prescott, eh?"

"Yes; and he is an inhuman brute! That is the reason the commander-in-chief wishes us to go and try to capture him."

Then Dick told his comrades what General Washington had told him regarding the behavior of General Prescott.

The youths were angry.

"The brute, sure enough!" exclaimed Bob. "I'm for going and capturing him."

"And I!"

"And I!"

"I am in for it!"

This was the general cry.

Dick smiled.

"I knew you would be in for it," he said. "It is going to be a very dangerous and difficult task, however. We take our lives in our hands when we venture upon this affair."

"No matter," cried Bob, "such doings as are the rule in Newport now, must be put a stop to."

"I think the same," said Dick; "and I told the commander-in-chief that we would make the attempt and would succeed, if such a thing was possible."

"Good for you, old man!"

"Yes, hurrah for Dick!"

"We like lively work, and this certainly will be lively enough for anybody."

"So it will!"

The youths were greatly pleased.

"The commander-in-chief, in recognition of the fact that the work will be exceedingly dangerous and difficult, has offered us a prize to work for, fellows," said Dick.

"A prize!" exclaimed Bob.

"You don't mean it!" from Mark Morrison.

"What is the prize, Dick?" from Sam Sanderson.

"I'll tell you: The commander-in-chief says that if we succeed in capturing General Prescott and bringing him here, he will give us a prize of twenty pounds in gold, and will write a letter to Congress, making a statement regarding the good work which we have done."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob. "We'll win the prize, all right!"

"We will, or know the reason why!"

"That's right!"

There was no mistaking the fact that the youths were delighted by the prospect of a thrilling adventure, or series of adventures.

They, like Dick, did not care so much for the prize, but they were swayed by a desire to serve their country and do something to benefit the cause, and, further, they were eager for adventure, the more exciting, the better it would suit them.

They were eager to hear the details of Dick's plans, and he told them what he intended doing.

The "Liberty Boys" possessed horses, and Dick said they would ride across the country to Newport.

It was decided to start that same day.

"The quicker we get started, the better I will like it," said Bob Estabrook, and it was the same with the rest of the youths.

It did not take them long to make all necessary arrangements.

All they had to do was to look to their weapons, lay in an extra supply of ammunition, saddle and bridle their horses, mount and ride away.

They were ready to start by two o'clock in the afternoon.

They did not delay.

They mounted and rode away, followed by the cheers of the patriot soldiers in the camp, who had learned of the dangerous nature of the expedition on which the "Liberty Boys" were starting.

The youths waved their hats in response to the cheer, and then galloped away.

CHAPTER II.

DICK AS A QUAKER.

"I guess we won't go any further on horseback, eh, Dick?"

"I guess not, Bob."

It was late in the afternoon, five days later than the day on which the "Liberty Boys" rode away from the patriot encampment on the Hudson River.

The youths sat on their horses, on the shore of what looked like a river or sound, a mile or so in width.

They had been forced to stop.

They could go no farther.

"What body of water is that, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"That must be Narragansett Passage, Mark," was the reply; "you know, that is the name mentioned by the man at whose house we inquired the way, five or six miles back."

"I remember; yes, I judge that is what it is."

"Then we are almost at our journey's end," said Bob.

"Yes, we are within three miles of Newport," said Dick.

"Good! Jove! I wish we were in Newport at this very moment."

"We'll get there sooner or later," said Dick; "we must be patient, however, and take our time. We must not be in too big a hurry."

"No," agreed Mark Morrison; "we must go slow and make sure of our ground."

"Right."

"Well, what is next on the programme, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook,

"The next thing is to dismount."

"All right; dismount it is."

Bob leaped to the ground.

The other "Liberty Boys" followed suit.

At the spot where the youths were, the trees were large but were not so thick as to make it inconvenient for the horses to move about, and at the order from Dick, the animals were led back among the trees and tied.

"Are we going to remain here all night, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"But why not make our way into Newport?"

Bob was nothing, if not impatient.

He wished to be up and doing.

"That will come after a while, Bob."

"But why not at once?"

"For the reason that it would be very dangerous to attempt it at once, Bob."

"I don't see why it should be any more dangerous at one time than at another."

"I do."

"Explain, then."

"Well, you see, it is this way, Bob: At present we know absolutely nothing regarding the lay of the land or anything regarding the number and location of the British in Newport. We must first investigate and find out those things. Then, after we have become familiar with it all and know where, when and how to go, we will move on to Newport and make an attempt to capture the British commander. We must not do anything blindly, however."

Bob nodded.

"I guess you are right," he acknowledged; "you usually are."

"There's a way to do everything, Bob, and as this is an unusually dangerous and difficult piece of work which we are to try to do, we must take more than ordinary precautions in going about it."

"What is first on the programme, then, if it is not for us to advance on Newport?"

"I am going there to reconnoiter, Bob."

"Good!" cried Bob. "I'm going with you."

Dick shook his head.

Bob's face fell.

"No?" he queried. "Why not?"

"I think it best that I should go alone."

"Why so?"

"I think it will be safer."

"I don't see how you make that out. If you get into trouble you will have no one along to help get you out."

"No, but neither will I be so likely to get into trouble if I go alone."

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, I judge you are right about that, Dick. Of course, we are not so likely to attract attention as two."

"No."

Dick gave orders for the youths to go into camp.

"Make things as snug and comfortable as possible, boys," he said; "you may have to remain here several days."

The youths went to work with energy, and got things into good shape before dark.

When they had eaten their supper, Dick brought out his suit of Quaker's clothing.

He doffed his uniform of blue and donned the suit.

When he had placed the wide-brimmed hat on his head, he made a very good showing, indeed.

Anyone would have thought him a Quaker, had they not known differently.

"Will I do, boys?" he asked.

The youths said he would.

"Say, you are a fine-looking Quaker, Dick!" said Bob, admiringly. "You will pass for one, anywhere."

"I'm glad you think so."

"How are you going to get over to Newport, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison. "It's water all the way, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And you have no boat."

Dick shook his head.

"Not at present," he replied.

"Then you think you will be able to get one?"

"I think so."

"Where?"

"Oh, along the shore, somewhere."

"True enough; there ought to be boats along the shore."

"I will find one, I am sure."

Dick now gave the youths some instructions, and with a cheery "good-by, boys!" took his leave.

He made his way down alongside the shore.

It was not yet so dark but that he could see tolerably well.

He kept his eyes open.

He wished to find a boat as quickly as possible.

Presently he stopped and listened.

He heard the sound of oars.

"I thought so!" he murmured. "A boat is approaching the shore, and, judging by the sound, will land at about this spot."

Dick decided to wait till the boat came ashore.

"I may be able to get the use of it," he thought.

Plainer and plainer sounded the oars.

The boat was drawing near.

Dick moved slowly down the shore, keeping along and moving in such fashion as would bring him to the spot where the boat would touch the shore.

Presently Dick discerned the boat.

It was not more than ten yards distant.

There was but one person in the boat.

This pleased Dick.

The fewer he would have to deal with, the better he would like it, for he had made up his mind to have the use of the boat, even though he had to take it by force.

Dick was determined to get across to Newport.

Dick saw where the boat was going to touch, and paused there and waited.

Presently the boat's nose struck the shore, there was a grating sound as the keel slid raspingly over the sand and gravel, and the boat came to a stop.

The occupant, whose back was toward the shore while rowing, had not seen Dick, as yet, nor did he know any one was present until after he had leaped ashore, when he nearly bumped against Dick.

He leaped back, with a cry of alarm, and Dick was pleased to note that the person in question was a boy of not more than fifteen or sixteen years of age.

"That is good," the youth said to himself; "I think I shall be able to fix things all right with the boy."

"W-who air yeou?" the boy cried, with a strong nasal twang.

"I am one who wilt do thee no harm, my young friend," said Dick, in a calm, measured tone of voice, such as he judged would be used by a genuine Quaker.

The boy was evidently glad to hear this.

"Whut d'yeou want?" he asked, in a relieved tone.

"I wish to secure thy services and those of your boat, my young friend."

"Ye dew?"

"Verily, I do."

"Whur d'yeou wanter go?"

"To Newport, my young friend."

"Ter Newport?"

"Yea, verily."

"Thet's er long ways, mister," hesitatingly; "an' ther folks will be lookin' fur me, an' like's not w'en I gits hum I'll get er strappin', ef I takes yeou acrost ter Newport."

"Verily, thy parents must be given to sin, my young friend. It is wicked to inflict punishment with the gad, save under severe provocation."

"Thet don't matter, mister; they'll lick me, jes' ther same, ef they takes ther notion. Ef yeou'll pay me, I'll resk et, howsumever."

"Verily, I will pay thee, and pay thee well, my young friend," said Dick.

"Heow much'll yeou giv' me?"

The boy was shrewd and thrifty-minded.

Dick named a sum.

"Will yeou giv' et ter me all in silver?" the boy asked.

His voice was eager.

"Yea, verily, I wilt give it to thee all in silver, my young friend," said Dick; "and I wilt pay it to thee in advance."

As he spoke, he jingled some silver.

The musical clink-clink of the silver was too much for the boy.

"All right," he said; "giv' me ther munny, an' I'll take ye acrost ter Newport."

It was not yet so dark but that Dick could see to count out the sum he had named, and he placed the silver pieces in the hands of the boy, who placed them in his pocket, carefully.

"Jump in!" he cried. "I'll git yeou over ter Newport ez quick ez I kin."

Dick climbed into the boat and seated himself at the stern.

The boy leaped in and took his seat, and, seizing an oar, pushed off.

Then he placed the oars in the rowlocks and began rowing.

The boy was an expert with the oars.

He forced the boat through the water, rapidly.

He was not long in crossing Narragansett Passage, but had to bear away toward the south, in order to get around the end of Conanicut Island.

This took quite a while, as the distance was considerable.

There were dangers to be encountered, too; dangers which Dick had failed to take into consideration.

There were a number of British warships anchored in the Middle Passage, through which it was necessary for

the boat to go in order to reach Newport, and suddenly the gigantic hull of one of those vessels loomed up in front. At the same instant a voice cried:

"Ahoy, the boat!"

CHAPTER III.

IN NEWPORT.

Dick was startled.

He felt that he was in danger.

"Back water!" he ordered, in a low, imperative voice. "I am in a hurry and cannot afford to lose time here."

The boy backed water at once.

He stopped the boat and forced it backward, away from the vessel.

"Stop!" roared a stentorian voice from the deck of the ship. "Don't try to get away. Stop where you are, or we will sink you with a solid shot!"

"Don't stop, my young friend," said Dick; "I am in great hurry, and they cannot hit the boat even if they do fire."

"I don't know abaout that, mister," the boy said, in a trembling voice; "them Britishers air purty good e... shootin' so they air."

"Yes, when they can see the mark they are aiming at. They won't be able to see us, so won't be able to hit us unless by accident. Row away as fast as thee can."

"All right, mister. Yeou've paid me, an' I'll do the bes' I kin fur yeou."

The boy rowed as hard as he could, and was soon out of sight of the ship.

Dick thought they had escaped.

He was mistaken, however.

The sounds of a boat being lowered were heard, coming from the direction of the ship.

The youth realized what this meant,

The British were going to give chase in a boat.

This was not pleasant to think of.

A half dozen strong-armed oarsmen could force a boat through the water faster than the boy could hope to.

"How far is it to Newport, my young friend?" asked Dick.

"Baout a mile an' a half, mister."

"So far as that?"

"Yes; ther way we hev ter go."

Dick was strong, and an expert with the oars.

He rose and said:

"Take the tiller, my young friend, and guide the boat. I will row in thy place, as I am stronger than thee."

"Dew yeou know how ter row, mister?"

"Yea, verily. I am skilled in the use of the oars."

"All right, mister."

The boy took his seat at the stern, and Dick took his place and began rowing.

The boy soon saw that the supposed Quaker was a good hand with the oars.

The boat moved forward much more rapidly.

"Yeou air all right, mister!" the boy said, admiringly. "I b'leve yeou kin keep them Britishers frum ketchin' us."

"I take it that thee do not like the British, my young friend," said Dick.

"Yeou air right erbout that, too. I don't like 'em, nur neether does my dad."

"It gives me pleasure to hear thee say so, my young friend, for I do not mind telling thee that I do not like them myself."

Dick bent to the oars and rowed with all his strength.

He knew that he would have to exert himself if he kept out of the way of the pursuing boat—for although he had not yet seen the boat, he was sure one was following them.

It turned out to be as he suspected.

The dark outlines of a boat presently appeared to view.

"Now I will have to look out!" the youth thought. "There are several men at the oars in that boat, and they can force it along faster than I can this one, alone."

Dick knew that his safety depended, to a large extent, on the distance still to be traversed in reaching Newport.

"How much farther is it to Newport?" he asked.

"Erbaout half a mile, mister."

Half a mile!

That was not far, yet it would be quite a distance to have to go with the British in swift pursuit.

Dick bent to the oars, however.

He set his teeth.

"I will get there ahead of them or know the reason why!" he said to himself, with grim determination.

It was destined to be a close race.

While yet half the distance remained to be traversed, the redcoats were within hailing distance.

"Stop!" came the command. "Stop, or we will fire!"

The boy was frightened.

"They're g-goin' ter s-shoot, mister!" he said, tremulously; "hedn't we better s-stop?"

"No, my young friend, we won't stop," replied Dick, calmly; "thee had better bend down, however, so that in case they do fire the bullets will go over thy head."

The boy did as Dick suggested.

Of course, Dick had no intention of stopping, so he made no reply to the challenge of the pursuers.

He kept right on rowing, with all his might.

An occasional glance over his shoulder showed him that he was approaching Newport, as he could see lights.

Suddenly there came several flashes from the pursuing boat.

The flashes were followed almost instantly by the crack! crack! crack! of the muskets.

Dick heard a bullet sing past his ear.

A cry of affright escaped the boy.

Doubtless it was the first time he had ever been under fire.

Dick spoke to him, reassuringly.

"Don't be afraid, my young friend," he said, "they cannot hit us. It would be an accident if they did."

"Thet's whut I'm erfeared uv—ther avident, mister," the boy replied, tremulously.

Dick could hardly keep from smiling, serious as was his situation.

The boy was experiencing the feeling that attacks all who are under fire for the first time; he thought that the next bullet might strike him.

Veteran soldiers soon stop thinking of what might happen, and calmly wait till something does happen. That is time enough, they reason—and it is the best philosophy.

Nearer and nearer the boat drew to the shore.

Dick began to think he would succeed in getting there far enough ahead of the redcoats so that he would be enabled to escape.

If he could do this, he would be all right.

The redcoats fired another volley, however, and one of the bullets struck Dick in the left arm, inflicting a slight flesh wound.

It was not serious enough to make the youth stop rowing, and he kept on, rowing his best.

"Whut air yeou goin' ter do when yeou git ter ther shore, mister?" the boy asked.

"I shall leap ashore and run for it, my young friend."

"An' whut'll I do?"

The boy was evidently badly frightened.

"I'll tell thee what thee can do."

"Whut?"

"Remain in the boat, and when the British come alongside, tell them that I took the oars away from thee and forced thee to let me have the use of thy boat."

"Yeou think they won't hurt me, then?"

"I think they will not injure thee, my young friend."

"All right; an' thank yeou fur tellin' me whut ter dew."

"Verily, thee art welcome."

Dick kept on rowing, strongly.

Soon the prow of the boat struck the sandy beach. With a hasty "good-by," Dick leaped ashore.

"Halt!" roared a stentorian voice from the pursuing boat, which was close enough so that Dick's action could be seen. "Stop! stop! or you are a dead man!"

But Dick had no notion of stopping.

He raced up the sloping beach with the speed of the wind.

Feeling sure that another volley would be fired, Dick ran in an erratic, zig-zag course, which was calculated to make the aim of the redcoats very uncertain.

The volley came, sure enough.

The redcoats were greatly angered by the thought that the fugitive would escape them, after all, and they fired several shots.

Fortunately, none of the bullets struck Dick.

He kept right on running, and by the time the British reached the shore he had disappeared.

Feeling that they could not overtake the fugitive, the redcoats turned their attention to the boy.

They addressed him, fiercely, and in such a threatening tone of voice that he was greatly frightened; but he remembered what Dick had told him to say, and he said it.

The redcoats seemed rather dubious regarding the truthfulness of the boy's story, but having no proof that it was not true, they were forced to accept it.

They knew the boat was a common fishing-boat, and the boy a fisherman's boy, so they did not hurt him in any way, save to frighten him terribly by threatening him.

They allowed him to take the oars, presently, and row away, much to his relief.

Meanwhile, Dick was making his way along one of the streets of Newport.

Newport was not a large place, but there were many nice residences and a great many good and refined people lived there.

Their lives were being made a burden to them, however.

The redcoats committed so many acts of vandalism that no one could feel safe.

Suddenly, as Dick turned a corner, he came upon a scene which made his blood boil with anger.

Two redcoats stood directly in the path of two beautiful girls, and would not let them pass.

"You must pay toll, pretty ones," one of the redcoats was saying; "you must give us some kisses before we will let you pass!"

"That's right," from the other; "some kisses from those ruby lips, pretty ones! It won't hurt you."

"Let us pass!" cried one of the girls, spiritedly; "you have no right to stop us!"

"Might is right, these times, my pretty miss!" with coarse laugh. "You will have to give us the kisses, for we are bound to have them."

"We shall do nothing of the kind. Stand aside!"

The girl's voice was clear and defiant, but it trembled somewhat, showing that its owner was nervous and frightened.

The two British soldiers merely laughed, and each leaped forward and seized one of the girls.

The girls gave utterance to screams.

"Help! Help!" they cried.

Help was at hand.

"You cowardly scoundrels!" cried Dick, and he leaped forward.

Crack! his fist took one of the redcoats.

The fellow uttered a cry of surprise and pain, and releasing his hold on the girl, went down with a thud.

Crack! Thump!

Dick dealt the other scoundrel two blows, and he, like his comrade, released his hold and went sprawling to the ground.

"Now you are free to go your way, young ladies," said Dick, quietly.

As he spoke, he lifted his broad-brimmed hat and bowed.

"Oh, thank you!—thank you!" one of the girls cried. "But you are in danger. Those two dreadful men will do you injury!"

"You are right about that, my pretty miss!" cried one of the redcoats, hoarsely, as he scrambled to his feet; "we will just about kill the young Broad-brim, and that's a fact!"

"We will that!" from the other, as he, too, scrambled to his feet.

"Thee wilt do well to go about thy business, friends," said Dick, quietly and calmly; "I am a man of peace, but if thee gets me aroused I may do thee grievous damage."

"Oh, sir, please come away!" one of the girls pleaded. "Those terrible men will hurt you if you do not."

"Have no fears, young ladies," said Dick; "I am able to take care of myself; and if those sons of sin attack me I shall smite them in a way that will teach them to behave themselves."

The redcoats were both on their feet by this time.

They uttered hoarse growls of rage as they heard what Dick said.

"Yes, you'll smite us, won't you!" cried one. "We'll show you! Go for him, Sanders!"

The two redcoats rushed at Dick with the fury of madened tigers.

The girls uttered cries of fear.

But they did not know that the youth who had come to their rescue was well able to take care of himself, even against three or four ordinary men.

Had they known it they would not have been so badly frightened.

They were soon to learn this, however.

So were the redcoats.

As the two men advanced, they began striking out at Dick in a fierce manner.

They expected to quickly knock him down, when they intended to leap upon him and pound him into a state of insensibility.

But Dick was to be taken into account.

They could not have everything their own way.

The youth ducked and evaded for a few moments, and then, getting the opening which he was looking for, his fists shot out, first the right, then the left, and down went the two redcoats, flat upon their backs, on the sidewalk.

The girls uttered exclamations of amazement and delight. "Goodness!" cried one; "who would have thought it possible!"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried the other.

At this instant three more redcoats appeared on the scene.

"Great guns! What's going on here?" cried one. "Is this your work?" the last to Dick, and in a fierce tone of voice.

CHAPTER IV.

IN DEADLY DANGER.

"Yea, verily, it is my work," said Dick.

A roar of rage escaped the redcoats.

"Go for him, fellows!" cried one. "Give it to him! We'll teach him a lesson!"

The three rushed upon Dick.

The youth realized that now he would, indeed, have his hands full.

He was determined to protect the girls from insult, however, and feeling that the only way to do this would be by thrashing the redcoats, he went in to do this.

He leaped backward, dodged, ducked, evaded, struck out, and finally succeeded in knocking the three down, one after another.

The other two were now on their feet, and they rushed at Dick with the ferocity of tigers.

"I am a man of peace," said Dick, "but since thee force me to it, take that—and that!"

The "thats" were two strong blows from his fist, which laid the redcoats flat upon the ground again.

Now the three were on their feet, and they hastened to return to the attack.

Dick received several blows, but none were serious; and presently he succeeded in downing the three a second time.

The girls stared in amazement.

They were wonder-stricken.

They would not have believed that one person could thus get the better of five.

They could not doubt the evidence of their own eyes, however.

They had seen Dick put the redcoats down, so it must be a fact.

The two redcoats were now on their feet once more, and they returned to the attack.

They advanced in such a hesitating, uncertain way, however, as to prove that they were doubtful of themselves, and it did not take Dick long to put them down.

The three were now up, and although badly jarred and demoralized, they attacked the youth once more.

Like the two, they were now somewhat demoralized, and it was easier for Dick to put them down this time.

He did it, too, and as quickly as possible.

The two redcoats now struggled to their feet and slunk away.

"Verily, they know when they have had enough," said Dick, quietly.

The three now struggled to their feet in their turn.

They, too, had enough.

They slunk away in the wake of their comrades.

"Verily, the sons of sin have fled before the arm of righteousness," said Dick.

Then he turned to the girls.

"Thee can go thy ways in safety now, young ladies," he said.

"Thanks to you!" from one of the girls.

"Oh, sir, how can we ever thank you!" from the other.

"Do not try," said Dick; "no thanks are necessary—I have a sister, and I have only done by thee as I would wish some one to do by my sister under like circumstances."

"You are brave and noble-hearted," one of the girls said, earnestly.

"So he is!" from the other.

"I have done my duty, no more, no less, young ladies; and now, if you will allow me, I will escort thee to thy homes."

"Oh, you are very, very kind!" from one.

"Yes, indeed!" from the other.

Dick made his way along the street in company with

the girls, and presently they paused in front of a nice-looking residence.

"I live here," said one, "and my companion is going to remain over night with me. Will you not tell us to whom we are indebted for protection when we so sorely needed it?"

"Richard Slater is my name, young ladies."

The girls thanked Dick, earnestly, and then he took his departure, after bidding them good-night.

Dick made his way along at a moderate pace.

"I wish I knew where General Prescott's headquarters are," the youth thought. "Well, I will find out sooner or later."

Dick was busy with his thoughts, and did not look behind him.

Had he done so he might have made a discovery.

He was being followed!

Several men were stealing along, keeping as close to him as possible.

Presently Dick struck into a street which was narrow and unlighted.

This was a place just suited to the purposes of Dick's shadowers.

They hastened their footsteps.

They drew nearer and nearer to the youth.

When Dick had reached a point about midway between the cross-streets, the men who were following him suddenly rushed forward and hurled themselves upon him.

Dick heard the sound of the rushing footsteps.

He started to turn to defend himself.

Too late, however.

The men were upon him.

There were five of the men.

Their combined weight was too much for Dick.

Taken at a disadvantage, he could do but little.

He was borne, struggling, to the ground.

He fought with all his might, even after this.

But to no avail.

His enemies had him in such fashion as to render him helpless.

They well knew this, and they chuckled in glee.

"We've got the young scoundrel, tight and fast!" said one. "Now, what shall we do with him?"

"I know a good place to take him," said another; "the rest of you bring him along, and I'll lead the way."

"All right; go ahead. We'll bring him."

Four of Dick's assailants held onto him, while the other took the lead.

The party made its way along the streets a distance of several blocks.

At last the leader came to a stop in front of a large deserted-looking house.

The house was in the outskirts of the town.

The leader took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

He opened the door and entered.

"Come along," he said; "bring the cub in here."

The four, with Dick in their midst, entered the house.

The leader had paused just within the doorway, and he now closed the door and locked it.

"Now wait a minute," he said, "I'll strike a light."

He was not long in lighting a candle.

"Come," he said, "bring him along."

He led the way back along a hall, and paused in front of a door on the left.

He opened the door and passed through into the room beyond.

The men followed, with Dick in their midst.

The leader deposited the candle on a table standing in the centre of the room, and then went and closed the door.

He locked it, and placed the key in his pocket.

"Sit down!" ordered one of the redcoats, indicating a chair.

Dick took a seat.

He took a good look at the men.

"They are the scoundrels who were annoying the girls back yonder, and with whom I had my encounter," thought Dick.

This knowledge was disquieting.

Dick had handled the fellows roughly, and they would no doubt, be eager to revenge themselves on him.

There was a bare possibility that the men might not know he was the person who had given them such a thrashing, Dick thought.

But this hope was soon dissipated.

The leader of the party of redcoats advanced and stationed himself in front of Dick.

He looked the youth over from head to foot.

"So," he said, "you had fun with us a little while ago now we are going to have fun with you!"

There was a fierceness in his tone that was not reassuring, to say the least.

Dick did not flinch, however, or show any sign of fear. He would not please the fellows by doing so.

Truth to tell, he did not feel greatly alarmed.

He did not think the redcoats would dare kill him.

Anything else that they might do, he felt that he would be able to endure.

Dick thought it possible he might make the redcoats think they had made a mistake, so he said:

"I know not the meaning of what thee has said." He affected a look of innocence, and pretended to be puzzled.

"Bah! you can't fool us, young fellow!" sneered the redcoat. "We know you are the chap who pounded us all up, while ago. We followed you and never lost sight of you for a moment."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, 'indeed!' And now we are going to get square with you for the way you handled us."

The fellow's tone was fierce and threatening.

Dick laughed.

"Well, it looks as if thee might be able to do as thee hast aid," he remarked, calmly.

The redcoats hardly knew what to make of Dick.

He was so cool and self-possessed that they were filled with surprise.

It was extraordinary, they thought.

"Who are you?" the spokesman of the redcoats suddenly asked.

"It does not matter who I am," replied Dick. "I am but simple Quaker lad."

The redcoat shook his head.

"I am not so sure of that," he muttered.

He looked at Dick searchingly.

He turned to his comrades.

He went across to the farther side of the room and beckoned to his comrades.

They came across and the five engaged in a whispered conversation.

Dick, who was watching them closely, while seemingly oblivious, saw that the men were not unanimous in their views.

"So much the better for me," he thought; "it may delay action on their part, and that is what I want."

He looked around the room.

He was looking for a possible avenue of escape.

There was but the one door—the one at which they had entered.

There were two windows.

Presently the redcoats got through with their discussion. Four came back and stood near Dick, while the fifth—he leader—left the room.

"I wonder what they are going to do?" thought Dick. He was soon to learn.

The redcoat returned, presently.

He brought a rope.

"Now what are they going to do with that rope, I wonder?" thought Dick.

The fellow approached Dick.

Pausing in front of the youth, he gazed, searchingly, into Dick's eyes.

"What are you, loyalist or rebel?" he asked.

Dick did not think it would be good policy to tell them the truth.

He felt that under the circumstances he would be justified in telling what was not exactly true.

"I am neither," he replied, in answer to the redcoat's question.

"Neither?"

"Neither; I am neutral."

The redcoat shook his head.

"That won't do," he said; "you must be either for or against. This thing of being neutral won't do at all. If you are not for the king, you are against him."

"I don't see how thee can make that out," said Dick; "I am neither for nor against him."

The man turned to his comrades.

"If he isn't for the king, he's against him, isn't he?" he said.

The men nodded.

"He is!" they said, in grim tones.

"And in that case he is a traitor to his king, eh, fellows?" The four nodded again.

"He is!" they declared.

"And what is the reward which shall be given to traitors?"

"A free dance at the end of a rope!"

The redcoat nodded.

"That is it, exactly!" he declared. "'Death to traitors' is our motto."

Then he drew a short piece of rope from his pocket.

"Bind his arms, fellows!" he ordered.

The four hastened to obey.

Dick, seeing that affairs were becoming serious, attempted to resist, but the four were too strong for him and three held him while the fourth tied his wrists together behind his back.

Meanwhile the other redcoat had busied himself tying a hangman's knot in the end of the long rope.

He had finished by the time the four had finished their work of binding Dick's wrists, and he placed the noose over the youth's neck.

"Come along, fellows," he said.

He led the way out of the room and up a flight of stairs which led to the floor above.

He tied the rope to the railing, which extended alongside the stair opening.

"I don't think your feet will touch the stairs," he said,

coldly and calmly; "we are going to throw you over the railing, and I think it will finish you!"

CHAPTER V.

DICK ESCAPES.

Dick eyed the man, searchingly.

He was a good judge of faces.

He made up his mind that the redcoat meant what he said.

The scoundrels really intended to hang him.

Dick's heart sank; but he did not despair.

He began casting about for some possible means of making his escape from the death which threatened.

There seemed to be no chance of doing so.

He was apparently helpless.

Dick presented an undaunted front, however.

He would not let his enemies have a chance to gloat over him.

If he must die, he would die game, and as became a member of the famous band of "Liberty Boys."

"Surely thee must be joking," said Dick, calmly; "thee cannot mean that thee wilt hang me."

The redcoat leered.

"You think not?" he half sneered.

"I don't think thee can mean what thee hast said."

"Well, we'll show you! You can just wager all your worldly possessions that we will do what I have said. You are doomed!"

But Dick was not to die just yet.

At this moment the sounds of yelling and rushing footsteps were heard down in the street. Then several shots were fired, and a voice cried out, as if in agony.

The redcoats looked at each other, inquiringly.

"What can it mean?" one asked.

"Let's go and see," from another.

"Yes; this affair can wait a few minutes," from still another.

The five left Dick standing there and rushed downstairs.

They opened the front door and ran out of doors.

Dick became all alive at once.

"Here is my chance!" he thought. "If I can get my hands free I shall be all right."

He began pulling and tugging at his bonds.

He worked rapidly, feverishly.

The redcoats might be back at any moment.

If they returned before he succeeded in getting his arms free, he would be doomed.

As good luck would have it, the redcoat who had bound Dick's wrists had not done a very good job.

Of course, he had not expected that the youth would have an opportunity of trying to get the bonds loose.

Dick worked rapidly, and was overjoyed to find, presently, that he was succeeding in getting the rope loosened.

He listened intently, so as to be sure of hearing the footsteps of the redcoats should they be returning.

He had almost succeeded in getting his wrists free when he heard the footsteps and voices of the returning redcoats.

"They are coming!" Dick thought. "I will have to hurry!"

He worked rapidly, feverishly.

Just as the first one of the redcoats to enter the house crossed the threshold, Dick succeeded in freeing his wrists.

He cast the rope down and proceeded to remove the noose from around his neck.

The redcoats glanced up and saw Dick in the act of doing this.

His surprise at seeing Dick's arms free was great.

He paused as if shot at.

He stared up at Dick in amazement.

His under-jaw dropped.

Then he suddenly aroused himself.

"Quick, fellows!" he cried. "The prisoner has freed his hands! Follow me!"

He bounded forward along the hall.

When he reached the stairs he came up them, three at a jump.

But Dick was acting at the same time.

He threw the noose off, just as the leading redcoat reached the foot of the stairs.

Then he turned and bounded away, down the hall.

Dick did not know where he was going, but he must get away from the redcoats, at all hazards.

The redcoats had left the candle when they went out of doors to investigate the cause of the yelling and shooting, and Dick blew out the light before leaping away.

This plunged the upper hall in darkness, and would make it difficult for the redcoats to hit Dick should they shoot at him.

Angry cries escaped the lips of the redcoats.

The thought that their intended victim might escape them, after all, was exasperating.

"Halt!" cried one. "Stop; you can't get away! Stop, or we will fire!"

Dick did not halt.

Neither did he reply.

He kept on till he came to the end of the hall.

Then he felt along the wall at the right-hand side.

He soon found a door.

Crack! Crack!

Two of the redcoats had fired.

Of course, they had fired altogether by guess.

They could not see, so could not take aim.

The bullets did not come anywhere near Dick.

As the reports sounded, Dick pushed the door open.

He stepped through the doorway, into the room beyond.

Then he closed the door.

He felt around and presently found the bolt.

He pushed the bolt into its socket.

"There!" he thought, with a sigh of relief. "I guess that will offer some resistance to the redcoats and delay them a little while, at any rate."

He heard the sound of hurrying feet out in the hall.

"They'll be after me very quickly," thought Dick. "I must get out of this house in some way. I am not safe yet, by any means."

Dick felt his way across the room.

He was on strange ground, and had to go slow.

He was soon at the farther side of the room.

He felt around till he found the window which he was sure must be there.

He tried the window.

It was fastened.

Dick soon found the fastening and loosened it.

Then he raised the window.

He leaned out and tried to see the ground.

He could see nothing distinctly.

He figured that it could not be more than fifteen feet to the ground, however, and decided to risk a drop from the window.

There came a rattling sound at the door of the room.

One of the redcoats was trying to open the door.

Of course, it would not open, and this was sufficient for the redcoat.

He knew that Dick must have taken refuge in the room.

"This way, fellows!" Dick heard a voice call. "I've got him treed. He's in this room. Come on, and help me force the door!"

"I'll have to get out of here at once!" thought Dick.

"They will break the door down."

He climbed over the window-sill and began lowering himself down.

He held onto the window-sill, and was soon hanging, extended, at full length.

At this instant there was a loud crash in the room.

The redcoats had burst the door open.

Dick did not delay longer.

He loosened his hold and dropped.

Downward he shot.

It seemed but an instant before he struck.

He struck the ground.

He was jarred, but was not injured.

Dick feared that he might strike on a fence, or something that would injure him in some manner, but the bare ground did not hurt him.

Dick hastened away from the vicinity with all possible speed.

He knew that the redcoats, eager for revenge on him for the pounding he had given them, would pursue him.

He was right in this.

The redcoats quickly learned that Dick had escaped from the house.

The open window told the story of how he had made his escape.

So eager were the redcoats to catch Dick that they did not wait to go back downstairs and out of doors the regular way, but climbed through the window and dropped, as Dick had done.

Then they set out in pursuit.

They had paused for an instant to listen, and hearing footsteps, they had gone in the direction in which the footsteps sounded.

They ran as swiftly as they could, but they were not as fleet of foot as was Dick.

He led his pursuers a merry chase, and by doubling and turning frequently, finally managed to throw them off the track altogether.

When he was sure of this, Dick paused and looked about him.

"Now, what shall I do next?" he asked himself.

He hardly knew what to do.

The fact of the matter was, that he could not do much at night.

He would have to wait till the next day, when he would, no doubt, be able to learn something that would be of value.

Dick decided to hunt up a tavern and put up for the night.

He moved down the street.

Presently he saw a group of men standing in the street. They were talking excitedly.

Dick walked very slowly, and when still ten yards distant he stopped.

He saw that the majority of the men were redcoats, and felt that he might be in danger if he ventured too near.

Dick listened to the conversation of the men for a few moments, and was reassured.

They were discussing an affray which had taken place

between some of the British soldiers and several citizens of the town.

Dick gathered that one of the citizens had been killed, and that a couple of the redcoats had been wounded.

Not feeling that he was concerned, he decided to go on about his business.

He walked onward.

He was not to get past unchallenged, however.

The redcoats were angered by the fact that a couple of their comrades had been wounded, and catching sight of Dick as he drew opposite them, they called to him to halt, and got in his way so as to bar his progress.

"Don't be so fast, my Quaker friend!" said one. "Who are you, anyway, and where are you going?"

"I see not why that should matter to thee," said Dick, calmly.

"Oh, you don't, eh?"

"I do not."

"Well, it does matter. When we see a Quaker running around on the streets, we usually inquire into the matter a bit. Who are you, and what are you doing on the streets at this time of the night?"

"I do not wish to give thee cause for anger, friend," said Dick, quietly, "but I must deny thy right to question me."

This made the redcoats angry.

"What's that! You deny my right to question you?"

"Say, there's insolence for you!"

"He is too saucy, altogether!"

"He needs a lesson!"

"Let's give him one!"

"Yes, let's give the saucy Broad-brim a drubbing!"

The redcoats made threatening demonstrations, but Dick did not flinch.

He waved the men back.

"I beg of you not to show me violence," he said; "if thee do, I shall defend myself. I give thee fair warning."

This amused the redcoats.

The idea of the one man offering resistance to the crowd was so absurd as to make them laugh.

"What could you do, Broad-brim?" laughed one. "You couldn't hurt a fly."

"I will admit that I am a man of peace," said Dick, calmly, "but if attacked, I shall defend myself. I give thee warning."

Again the redcoats laughed.

"Go for him, fellows!" cried one. "Let's put him to the test!"

The redcoats leaped forward, and feeling sure that the time had come for action, Dick struck out straight from the shoulder.

Once, twice, thrice he struck out, and each time down went a man.

This was a good start, but Dick did not let it stop here.

He suddenly became converted into a human cyclone—at least so it seemed to the redcoats.

He went at the astonished British soldiers with a fierceness that amazed them.

More, it demoralized, almost paralyzed them.

They would not have believed one man could do so much work in such a brief space of time as Dick did, in less than half a minute.

Dick knocked seven or eight of the redcoats down, and leaped away, up the street, almost before they could realize what was taking place.

The others recovered from their temporary feeling of stupor, however, and set out in chase of Dick.

"Stop! stop!" some yelled.

"Kill him!" others shouted.

"Kill the Quaker!"

There is no doubt that Dick would have suffered at their hands had they succeeded in getting their hands on him, but he was too fleet for them, and gradually drew away from his pursuers.

He got clear away from them, after a while, and then breathed a sigh of relief.

"I guess I had better find a tavern and get in out of sight," Dick thought. "I'll get into serious trouble, if I am not careful."

CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL PRESCOTT SEES STARS.

Dick soon found a tavern, and engaging and paying for a room, he went to it, and to bed.

He was soon asleep, and slept soundly till morning.

As soon as he had eaten breakfast, he went out upon the street.

He stopped a boy, whom he met.

"Wilt thee tell me where General Prescott has his headquarters, my young friend?" Dick asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

Then he showed Dick the house where Prescott had his quarters.

Dick thanked the boy and made his way toward the house.

Pausing on the opposite side of the street, Dick took a survey.

He wished to size the place up.

Dick did not like the location of the house very well.

It was one of an almost unbroken series, and it would be impossible to surround it, should he come there with his "Liberty Boys" for the purpose of trying to capture General Prescott.

It would be an exceedingly dangerous undertaking to venture into Newport with the "Liberty Boys," anyway.

Still Dick was determined to risk it, if no other way offered.

He was determined to capture the British commander.

Dick did not linger in the vicinity any longer than was necessary.

He was afraid he might attract attention, and that would be dangerous.

Dick wandered about the town.

He was studying its location, the run of the streets, and everything of that kind.

At noon he returned to the tavern where he had slept and breakfasted, and ate dinner.

During the afternoon Dick kept up his work of familiarizing himself with Newport and its surroundings.

At about the middle of the afternoon, as Dick was walking slowly along, he met a British officer.

As he approached Dick, the officer looked at the youth, sternly and frowningly.

Dick did not like the man's look, but was passing quietly by when the officer suddenly leaped forward and seized him by the throat.

"You refuse to take off your hat to me, do you, you Quaker dog!" the officer cried, his face red with anger. "Well, I will give you a lesson in manners which you will not soon forget!"

The officer was a large, strong man.

As he spoke, he shoved Dick over against the wall.

He attempted to bump the youth's head against the wall.

Dick had now recovered from his surprise, however, and was himself again.

Dick was a phenomenally strong youth.

Few men were his equal in this respect.

He exerted his strength and succeeded in keeping the man from accomplishing his purpose.

At the same time a startling thought flashed into Dick's mind:

Might not this man be General Prescott?

General Washington had said that the British commander made a practice of bumping the heads of Quakers against the wall, if they refused to take off their hats to him; or of pounding them over the shoulders with a gnarled stick.

And this man carried a heavy, gnarled stick!

"It is he!" thought Dick. "I am sure of it. Jove! if my 'Liberty Boys' were only here!"

But the "Liberty Boys" were not there.

Dick was alone, so did not dare try to capture the man. He made up his mind to turn the tables on the British commander, however.

General Prescott had been in the habit of bumping the heads of Quakers; Dick would bump the General's head and see how he liked it.

Dick could hardly keep from smiling as the humor of the idea struck him.

It would be retributive justice.

Dick began to work toward this end.

He seized hold of the man, and began manoeuvring to get a hold that would enable him to accomplish his purpose.

Evidently the offensive move on Dick's part astonished the officer.

"Why, why, what does this mean!" he cried. "You insolent scoundrel! Do you dare offer resistance? I will have you hanged, as sure as my name is Prescott!"

"It is he, sure enough!" said Dick to himself. "Good! Will have me hanged, will you? Very well; I'll give you a sore head, first!"

Dick began working with great vigor.

He managed to get his favorite hold—the throat of his opponent.

The instant he succeeded in this, Dick gave the British officer's throat a squeeze that brought an exclamation of rage and pain from its owner.

The exclamation was inarticulate, almost, as Dick's grip was so tight the man could scarcely give utterance to a sound.

That the officer was amazed and angry, however, was evident from the look upon his face.

Murder was written there.

He began struggling fiercely.

He was a large, powerful man, and he gave Dick some trouble.

The youth was phenomenally strong, however, and was as supple and active as a cat, and he more than offset the others' efforts.

Then, too, the deadly throat-hold gave him an advantage. General Prescott began to gasp and gurgle.

He grew red in the face, and then almost black.

No doubt he would have called for help had he been able to do so.

He could utter no cry, however.

Dick now had things his own way.

He slammed the officer against the wall with great force.

Then he bumped the man's head against the wall a number of times.

Doubtless the hard-headed British officer saw more stars than he had ever before seen in the daytime.

Suddenly Dick heard excited cries, and the sound of rushing feet.

He glanced around.

A dozen redcoats were running toward him.

They were, perhaps, fifty yards distant.

Dick realized that he was in danger.

If he remained where he was he would be captured.

And to be captured would mean little short of death, as the British commander would not spare one—and a Quaker at that—who had dared to treat him as Dick had done.

The youth had little doubt that hanging would be his fate.

So, not wishing to be captured, he suddenly released the officer and darted away, down the street.

By the time the redcoats reached the point where General Prescott stood, he had regained his wind and was able to speak.

He was wild with rage.

He pointed toward Dick.

"Capture that scoundrel!" he cried. "Don't let him escape! Twenty pounds to the man or men who first lay hands on him!"

"We'll capture him!" was the cry, and the redcoats ran onward in pursuit of Dick.

Dick was pretty shrewd, however.

He had not spent nearly a whole day looking around the town for nothing.

He had made mental note of some places which offered opportunities for hiding.

Dick made his way in the direction of the nearest one of those places.

It was an old house, unoccupied, which stood in the midst of a clump of trees.

Dick ran swiftly.

He left his pursuers gradually behind.

Presently he reached the clump of trees.

He darted into the midst of the trees and disappeared from the view of his pursuers.

They uttered yells, and came on as rapidly as they could.

Dick ran rapidly through the clump of trees.

He did not stop at the old house.

He reasoned that his pursuers would think he had done so, and that they would lose valuable time stopping to look for him there.

So he kept on.

He ran clear through to the other side of the clump of trees, and out at the side.

He kept on down the street.

It sloped toward the water.

He reached the water, and noticing a boat, leaped into it; and, seizing the oars, he rowed away as fast as he could.

The pursuers had discovered, ere this, that Dick had not stopped in the old house, and they had come on and had emerged from among the trees in time to see the youth enter the boat and row away.

They came running down to the shore, giving utterance to wild yells.

When they reached the shore they were at fault.

There were not boats there in which they could follow the fugitive.

Farther along the shore were boats, however, and the redcoats ran in that direction.

A quarter of a mile distant they found what they were looking for.

They leaped into the boats and started in pursuit of Dick.

Dick was an expert with the oars, however, and he drew rapidly away from his pursuers.

The redcoats were not experts, and their efforts were of the most clumsy description.

Dick knew it would not do to try to row out through the passage, in a southerly direction, as the British warships guarded the passage at that point; so he rowed in a northerly direction.

In order to round the north end of Conanicut Island, Dick would have to row at least five miles, but this would not be a great task for him.

He was strong, and his muscles were seasoned.

He rowed onward and gradually increased his lead.

He was not more than an hour in rounding the end of the island, and by that time he was nearly a mile in advance of his pursuers.

"I don't believe they will pursue me any farther," thought Dick. "In that case there will be no need of me going any farther. I wish to return to Newport as soon as darkness sets in, anyway, and there is no use of tiring myself out by rowing to the mainland, if I am not pursued."

Dick decided to stop, and see what his pursuers did before continuing on his way.

He took a careful survey of the shore of the island.

Seeing no signs of any one, he rowed in to the shore and alighting from the boat tied the painter to a tree.

He made his way up to the top of a little promontory, and looked back in the direction from which he had just come.

The pursuing boats had come to a stop.

Dick had expected this.

He was glad to see it, too.

It would save him considerable work, as he would not have to row on over to the mainland.

The redcoats were evidently discussing the situation.

They undoubtedly came to the conclusion that it would be useless to follow Dick any farther, for the boats turned around and started back toward Newport.

"Good!" thought the youth. "I am all right now. All that I will have to do will be to wait here till dark and then I can row back to Newport with perfect safety."

Dick remained where he was and watched the boats till they got to be mere specks on the water, then he went back down to where he had left his boat.

A surprise awaited him there.

His boat was gone!

It had mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER VII.

"RODERICK, THE STRONG."

Dick was amazed.

He was startled as well.

What had become of his boat?

It had not drifted away, of that he was certain, for he had tied the painter securely.

Then some one must have taken it!

But who?

That was the question.

And where was the person now?

Dick looked out over the water, and up and down the shores on the island.

He could see nothing of the boat.

Whoever had taken the boat had not left the island.

Dick was sure of this.

"He must have gone down along the west shore," thought Dick; "if he had come along the east shore I would have seen him."

Proceeding on this theory, Dick started along the shore.

He walked as rapidly as the nature of the ground would permit, and kept a sharp lookout for the boat.

The timber and underbrush were thick, making progress rather difficult, and as the shore was crooked, there being a great many bends and indentures, Dick's progress was slow.

He had progressed perhaps half a mile when suddenly he was startled by hearing a noise behind him.

He whirled quickly.

As he did so he caught sight of a nondescript-looking being, who was almost upon him, and who evidently intended to attack him.

Dick did not have time to evade the newcomer, but he seized hold of him, and a struggle began.

Dick soon realized that he was in danger.

The man was very strong.

Dick could see his opponent's face, and he noted that there was a wild light glowing in the man's eyes.

"I believe he is insane!" the youth thought.

A thrill went through him.

It was a thrill that was akin to horror.

Dick did not like the idea of having to contend with a crazy man.

It was not pleasant to think of.

The fellow was wonderfully strong.

Dick had never in his life been engaged in a contest with one so preternaturally strong as this man.

The youth fought with energy and determination, however.

He was working to secure a throat-hold.

If he could do that he felt confident that he would be able to overcome the strange being, in spite of his wonderful strength.

Dick and his opponent swayed and bent, first one seeming to have the advantage, then the other.

They staggered hither and thither.

They panted and gasped.

The strange being growled much after the fashion of a wild beast.

Feeling sure that his life was at stake, Dick fought with desperate energy.

Suddenly Dick's feet got tangled in a trailing vine.

He realized his danger.

He made a desperate effort to free his feet.

He was unable to do so.

The man seemed to understand the predicament of his opponent.

He gave utterance to a chuckle of delight.

He threw his weight against the youth.

Dick was unable to move backward, to offset the man's weight, and the result was that he was thrown to the ground.

The madman—for such he undoubtedly was—gave utterance to a cry of delight, and fell upon Dick with all his force.

His long, bony fingers grasped Dick by the throat.

He compressed the fingers, and to Dick they seemed to be made of steel.

The youth gasped for breath.

He struggled desperately.

He tried to tear those steel-like fingers loose from his throat.

To no avail.

He could not do it.

Dick realized this.

It was terrible.

Was he to die here in the woods, at the hands of a madman?

It began to look as if this was to be his fate.

But he would not give up.

He would fight to the last.

He kept on struggling and trying to get the fingers loose from his throat.

He felt that if he could do this he might still be able to get the better of the man.

But he could not get his throat free from the terrible grip of the madman.

Dick gasped and gurgled.

He heard a strange, singing noise.

The sky grew dark and hazy.

He tried to get his breath, but could not do it.

Dick realized that he was on the verge of becoming unconscious.

What would happen to him as soon as he should become unconscious, he asked himself.

While he was wondering, he suddenly became insensible.

For once Dick had been overcome in a hand-to-hand combat.

Ill luck had been largely responsible for it, however.

Had his feet not become entrangled in the vines he might have gotten the better of his opponent.

As soon as he realized that Dick was unconscious, the man let go of the youth's throat.

He rose to his feet.

He stood and looked down on the insensible youth with an expression of triumph in his eyes.

He chuckled, audibly.

"So he thought to overcome Roderick, the Strong, did he?" the man murmured. "Ha! he is a fool, like all the rest. It is something no living man can do. I am stronger than Samson of old!"

The man was certainly insane.

The madman looked down on Dick for a few moments, and then a frown came over his face.

"What shall I do with him?" he muttered.

He scratched his head and looked reflective.

Suddenly he chuckled again.

"I know what I will do," he murmured; "I will take him home with me, and then, as soon as he comes to, we will have another combat. Doubtless he will say that he would have overcome me if his feet had not become entrangled in the vine, and will wish to try it over again. I shall be willing—more than willing, for I am Roderick, the Strong! I am the strongest man in the world, and I am glad of a chance to prove it. Ha! ha! ha!"

The laughter of the madman was something uncanny to hear.

Dick could not hear it, however, so it had no effect on him.

The madman stooped and lifted Dick's seemingly lifeless form as easily as though it were a bundle of straw, and strode away through the timber.

He made his way along a distance of perhaps a hundred yards, when he came to a log house.

The door of the house stood open.

The man walked into the house, and as he did so a rather good-looking, but sad-faced girl of about seventeen years of age looked up from some sewing she was engaged upon.

As her eyes fell upon the burden the man was carrying, a cry escaped her.

"Oh, father, who is it? What is the matter with him? You haven't killed him!" she cried, rapidly, tremblingly.

The madman placed Dick's form on a cot at one side of the room before replying.

Then he said, calmly and deliberately:

"I have not killed him, daughter. He is not dead. He pitted his puny strength against my wonderful strength, that is all, and the result was that he got the worst of it. I have brought him here, and as soon as he comes to we will have another contest. He is strong, very strong for a youth, but he is no match for Roderick, the Strong!"

A sad look came over the girl's face as she listened.

A solicitous look was on her face as she gazed down upon the face of the insensible youth.

She noted the red stripes where the madman's fingers had compressed Dick's throat.

She turned and hastened away.

She went into another room, but quickly returned.

She brought a wet cloth.

Kneeling beside the cot, she bathed Dick's face.

The cold water was just what was needed.

After a little, Dick gave utterance to a gasping sigh, and opened his eyes.

He looked around him wonderingly.

He looked into the face of the girl, and a puzzled look appeared in his eyes.

"Where am I?" he murmured. "What has happened?" Then, as Dick's eyes fell upon the face of the madman, he started.

"Ah, I remember now!" he said.

"You pitted yourself against the mighty Roderick," said the madman, with a chuckle; "you pitted yourself against Roderick, the Strong, and got the worst of it. But you shall have another try, if you wish. If you think I did not win fairly, you can have another chance."

"Don't mind him," whispered the girl, a look of pain on her face, "he is not right in his head. Pacify him by telling him that he is your superior in strength, and it will be all right. He will not hurt you."

"Very well, and thank you for the suggestion," said Dick. Then to the man he said:

"I am satisfied, sir. I am no match for you. I do not think it worth while to pit myself against you again. It would be the same thing over again."

The madman chuckled in a self-satisfied way.

"Then you acknowledge it, do you? You are indeed wise, for you stand no chance against Roderick, the Strong."

"I know it," said Dick.

He swung his feet to the floor and rose to a sitting posture.

"Who are you, and why are you living here?" asked Dick, looking inquiringly at the girl.

"My name is Mary Underhill, and I have lived here for years with my father," was the reply.

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes;" and then, with an inquiring look: "Who are you, and how came you on the island?"

"I came ashore, down at the end of the island, a while ago," explained Dick, "and while I was away from my boat some one took it away. I was looking for it when—when your father came upon me."

"Ha! ha! ha! You are clever, young man, very clever," laughed the madman; "but you were searching for me. You wished to try your strength against that of Roderick the Strong! You need not deny it for it will do no good."

Dick saw it would do no good to dispute the word of the madman.

He laughed, and nodded.

"Yes, you are right," he agreed; "I got the worst of it, too, and I am ready to go away just as soon as I can find my boat."

The girl turned to the man.

"I am needing some water, father," she said; "will you go to the spring and bring me some?"

"Yes, daughter."

The man at once left the room.

"He will be gone several minutes," the girl said, in a hurried voice. "He took your boat. Come with me and I will show you where it is hidden."

"I shall be very much obliged to you, miss," said Dick, earnestly.

The girl led the way out of the house, Dick following closely.

A short walk brought them to the water's edge.

The girl pointed to a clump of bushes which extended out over the water.

"Your boat is under there," she said.

"Thank you," said Dick; "thank you, very much! But won't your father be very angry when he discovers that I have recovered my boat and gone away?"

"Yes; but he won't harm me. He might hurt you if he got the chance, and for that reason you had better go at once. He might come at any moment."

At this instant the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard.

"He is coming!" the girl cried. "Hurry, get into your boat and go away. If he catches you now he may do you serious harm. Hurry!"

Dick had no desire to become engaged in another combat with the madman.

Not that he feared for himself, but he was afraid he might have to do the poor man serious hurt in protecting himself, and for the daughter's sake he would have hated to have to do that.

So he said good-by, and hastened in under the clump of bushes.

Sure enough, his boat was there.

As Dick stepped into the boat and started to untie the painter, he heard the hurrying footsteps close at hand and he heard, also, angry cries.

"Hurry!" came in the excited voice of the girl. "Don't delay an instant."

Dick got the painter untied and pushed the boat's head away from the shore just as the madman came plunging under the bushes.

"Hold! Stop!" the madman cried. "You must not go! You shall not go! Stop, I say!"

But Dick had no notion of stopping.

He seized the oars, placed them in the rowlocks, and began pulling.

The madman yelled and raged, but it did no good.

Dick kept at work with the oars.

He pulled out from the shore a distance of perhaps fifty feet, and then rowed leisurely along, keeping about the same distance from the shore all the time.

The madman ran along the shore, keeping pace with the boat.

He kept ordering Dick to come to the shore, and when the youth kept right on in the direction of the end of the island, and paid no attention to the madman, he became wild with rage.

He threatened Dick, telling him what he would do if he got hold of him, but Dick did not intend that this should happen.

The youth rowed leisurely along.

He was in no hurry.

He did not wish to get back to Newport before dark.

So he had time to spare.

He reached the end of the island presently.

Rounding it, he headed toward Newport.

He turned and looked back over his shoulder.

He could see no boats anywhere between him and his destination, so he felt that he was safe.

He looked back toward the island.

The madman stood up on the promontory.

He was waving his arms and gesticulating in a threatening manner.

He was giving utterance to threats, too, but Dick had nothing to fear from him.

Dick rowed very leisurely.

His object was to kill time, so he would not reach Newport until after dark, and he succeeded.

It was dark when he got there, and a few minutes later he was again threading the streets of Newport.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

Dick made his way in the direction of the house occupied by General Prescott.

He was not a great while in reaching there.

Dick wished to enter the house.

But how was he to do so?

That was the question.

The youth was one who made quick decisions, however.

He made up his mind to try the doors and windows.

He might find one that was unfastened.

Dick walked right up to the front door and tried it.

It was bolted.

There were a couple of windows in front.

Dick tried these.

They were fastened.

Hearing some one coming, Dick hastened away.

He made his way to the corner.

Here he turned and made his way back to the alley.

He turned into the alley and made his way up it till he was at the rear of the house occupied by the commander of the British forces.

Dick climbed over the fence and crossed the little backyard.

There was a door at the rear.

Dick tried this.

It was, like the one at the front, fastened.

There were two windows.

Dick proceeded to try these.

The first one was immovable.

The other gave slightly, but would not go on up.

Dick figured that the window-catch must be weak and defective.

"If I had something to pry with, I believe I could raise the window," he thought.

Then he began looking around for something to pry with.

He soon succeeded in finding a stout stick.

Taking a knife from his pocket, Dick whittled the stick to a sharp point.

He returned to the window.

Placing the end of the stick under the window, Dick pried upward.

The window moved slightly.

"Good!" thought Dick. "I'll get it up, I am sure."

He caught a deeper hold with the stick and pried again.

The window moved upward some more.

Again Dick caught a deeper hold with the stick.

He pried, with a strong, steady lift.

There was a snapping sound, and the window moved an inch or more.

"Good!" thought Dick. "I've broken the catch. Now I shall be able to raise the window without difficulty."

This proved to be the case.

The catch was broken, and Dick easily raised the window.

The youth listened a few moments.

He wished to make sure he had not attracted the attention of any one within the house.

He heard no sound to indicate the presence of any one.

"I guess no one heard me," thought Dick. "I'll go in."

He climbed slowly and carefully through the window.

A few moments later he stood erect within the room into which the window opened.

Dick again listened.

He heard no sounds at all.

Being sure that he had not disturbed any one, or attracted attention, Dick moved slowly and carefully across the room.

His arms were outstretched in front of him, and he felt his way carefully.

He was on strange ground, and it was necessary that he be very cautious.

Presently he reached the wall.

He felt along the wall.

Soon his hand came in contact with a door-knob.

Dick turned the knob.

He pushed the door open.

Slowly and carefully he made his way through the opening.

Dick could not see a thing.

There was not a light to be seen anywhere.

Dick decided that he must be in a hall.

He felt around and soon discovered that this was the case.

The hall extended toward the front of the house.

Dick made his way slowly along the hall.

He felt his way.

Occasionally he paused and listened.

As yet he had not heard a single sound to indicate that the house was occupied.

"I wonder if I have made a mistake?" Dick asked himself. "I should think that if this house is occupied I would have seen or heard somebody before this."

Then he thought that the hired help had got an evening out, and that the officers and members of his suite might be upstairs.

"I'll go upstairs and see what I can find, anyway," the youth thought.

He made his way along the hall as rapidly as was consistent with carefulness.

At last he came to a stairway.

"Good!" said Dick to himself. "Now I can go upstairs, and I will soon find out whether or not there is anybody here."

Dick made his way up the stairs.

He went slowly, as the stairs creaked somewhat, and he did not know who might be listening.

When he was at the top, he paused and listened.

He could hear no sound.

He strained his eyes to pierce the darkness surrounding him.

Dick thought that he saw a faint streak of light some distance in front of him.

He moved slowly and cautiously toward the point in question.

Presently he reached it.

He saw that the light in question came underneath a door.

Dick listened at the door for a few moments.

He could not hear a sound.

"This is the quietest place I have found in a long time!" thought Dick. "Some one must live here, else there would be no light."

Dick stood silent for a few moments.

Then he placed his hand on the door-knob.

He turned the knob.

He exercised the utmost care in doing so.

He knew he was taking a great risk.

There might be some one in the room.

He might see the door-knob turn.

In that case he would be on the watch for some one to enter.

Then it would fare badly with the youth if he should enter.

Dick was not to be kept back by fears of what might be, however.

He was a brave youth, ready to take chances in order to make a success of any undertaking on which he was engaged.

The door was not locked.

When Dick had turned the knob as far as he could, and pushed against the door, the door opened.

Dick more than half expected to be greeted by a pistol shot.

It would not have surprised him had two or three men leaped upon him.

But nothing of the kind occurred.

There was a very good reason for this.

The room into which Dick looked was unoccupied.

At any rate, there was no one in the room at that moment.

Dick, feeling sure of this, stepped across the threshold.

He closed the door behind him.

He began making an examination of the room and its contents.

He soon became convinced that he was in the room occupied by a high British officer.

"I should not be surprised if it were General Prescott's room!" thought Dick.

Acting on this theory, and thinking he might find papers of value, Dick began a search of the drawers of a desk at one side of the room.

While thus engaged, Dick was suddenly startled by hearing voices and footsteps.

Somebody was coming.

There were more than one.

The footsteps sounded in the hall and on the stairs.

Dick thought first of bolting from the room.

He feared he would be seen, however, and dismissing this thought he looked about him for some other means of escape.

There was another door at one side of the room.

Dick opened this door.

It opened into a large closet.

The closet was pretty well filled with clothing—mostly British uniforms.

The footsteps and voices were almost at the door of the room now.

Dick had no time to spare.

He stepped into the closet and closed the door.

At the same instant the other door opened and three British officers entered.

Dick could not see them, but he could hear them.

He listened intently.

He soon became convinced that one of the three was General Prescott.

This was the case.

The other two were his confidential advisors.

"It is too bad that that scoundrel Quaker was not captured this afternoon, your excellency," said one of the men.

An angry exclamation escaped the lips of General Prescott.

"I wish my men had captured him," he cried; "I would have had the scoundrel hanged, as sure as my name is Prescott!"

"And quite right, too!"

"Yes, the rascal deserves to be hung."

Thus spoke Prescott's companions.

"The idea of his daring to offer violence to me!"

The British commander's voice vibrated with anger.

Evidently the officer thought no greater crime could be committed than for any one to offer violence to his august self.

Dick listened, with amusement.

He knew they had reference to the episode of the afternoon, when he had bumped the head of the British commander against the wall.

"It is really too bad," thought Dick, sarcastically; "it is certainly a terrible thing for a person to do—to defend one's self against attack from a tyrant and scoundrel. I must say, though, that I am not sorry I did so, and I think I should do the same thing again."

The three officers kept up a running conversation, and Dick could tell that they were drinking and smoking.

"By the way, your excellency," one of the officers said, after a slight pause, "are we to make that trip up to the end of the island to-morrow, as we had intended?"

"Yes, we will go, Mossett."

This in Prescott's voice.

"How long will we be away?"

"We will be gone all day to-morrow and all night to-morrow night."

"Where will we stay to-morrow night?"

"At Morton's Tavern."

"Oh, yes; well, that will be all right. Morton gives fellow plenty of good food and plenty of good wine."

"So he does."

Dick made a mental note of this.

Somehow, he felt that here was to be the opportunity for which he was looking.

If the tavern in question was any distance removed from the camp of the British, Dick was sure he and his "Liberty Boys" could effect the capture of the British commander.

At any rate, they might wait a long time before they would have a better chance, Dick thought.

He made up his mind to investigate matters at the earliest possible moment.

He would go and look over the ground early in the morning.

He would locate Morton's Tavern, and the camp of the British.

Then he would return to the mainland, to the point where the "Liberty Boys" were encamped, they would procure boats, row back to the island, make their way to the tavern and capture General Prescott.

Dick had heard all that he cared to hear now.

He wished that he was out of the room.

But how was he to get out?

That was the question.

It was a difficult question, too.

Dick had taken note of the fact that there was a bed in the room.

He reasoned, from this, that he would be unable to make an attempt to leave the room until after the two officers had taken their departure, and General Prescott had gone to bed and to sleep.

This might be several hours yet.

This was not pleasing to think of.

Dick was somewhat cramped for room, and was almost smothered.

It was very hot and close in the closet.

Dick was almost gasping for breath.

"I must have some air," the youth thought, "come what may, I am going to open the door a little ways. I'll smother to death, anyway, if I don't."

Dick knew it would be dangerous to open the door, but it ever so slightly.

One or more of the officers might have his or their eyes in the door, and would see the least movement.

But no matter.

He must open the door or die.

Taking hold of the knob, Dick turned it, slowly and gently.

When he had turned the knob as far as it would go, Dick pushed the door open about an inch.

As he did so, he heard a startled exclamation from one of the officers.

"The closet door!" the officer cried. "I saw it move!"

CHAPTER IX.

BACK AMONG HIS "LIBERTY BOYS."

Dick's heart nearly stood still.

What he had feared might happen, had happened.

One of the officers had chanced to be looking at the door as Dick pushed it open.

The result was the exclamation and the words as given above.

"What's that!" this in the voice of General Prescott. "You saw the closet door move? You must be mistaken."

"No, I am not!" in a dogged tone. "The closet door was tight shut when we came in here, and just now it suddenly came open an inch at least. It stands that way now, as you may see for yourself. I believe there is some one in there."

There was a rattling sound as of a sword being drawn from its scabbard, as the officer ceased speaking.

This was exactly what had taken place.

All three men rose to their feet.

"I'll soon see whether or not there is any one in there!" cried General Prescott.

He strode toward the closet door as he spoke.

Dick heard the words, and the approaching footsteps.

He realized that he was in for it.

In another instant he would be discovered.

He had had but little time for thought.

He had to decide upon his course of action instantly, as it were.

He did so.

He made up his mind to act promptly and boldly.

He felt that his best chance for success lay in doing this.

He gathered himself together for the effort.

He knew it would take quick, fierce work to insure his success and make it possible for him to escape.

The next instant the closet door came open with a jerk.

General Prescott stood there.

He got one glance at Dick.

"The Quaker!" he cried, in amazement.

Dick said not a word.

He acted, instead.

Out shot his arm.

His fist caught the British commander fair between the eyes.

Dick had put as much force in the blow as the cramped nature of his quarters would permit.

This was sufficient for the youth's purpose.

The officer went down, flat on his back on the floor, with a crash.

Then Dick leaped through the doorway.

The two officers stood, staring in open-mouthed amazement.

They seemed paralyzed.

The presence of Dick was very surprising, in the first place, and then the audacity of the youth in knocking the British commander down was in itself almost sufficient to render the two officers incapable of a movement.

Dick rushed toward the one standing nearest him.

The other officer held a sword in his hand.

As Dick advanced, the two suddenly regained possession of their faculties.

"I'll run him through!" cried the one with the sword.

But Dick did not intend to permit this to be done.

He seized the officer who was unarmed.

He kept his eyes on the one with the sword.

He knew the fellow would run him through, if he got the chance.

Quakers were at a discount in Newport in those days, and Dick especially was under a ban.

The youth was determined that he would not die by the sword of the British officer, however.

The youth was phenomenally strong.

And now, in this supreme moment of danger, he felt that he was doubly strong.

He lifted the officer off his feet and raised him in the air.

As the officer with the sword leaped forward, intent on imbedding the point of the weapon in Dick's body the youth hurled the unarmed officer through the air.

He went as if shot out of a cannon.

His body struck that of his brother officer.

The momentum was great, and the officer could not stand up before the impact of the flying body.

He went down, with a crash, with his brother officer on top of him.

Wild yells and curses escaped both.

General Prescott, who was struggling to his feet, added some to the general stock of cries and epithets.

The instant Dick hurled the officer from him, he leaped toward the door.

He jerked the door open and leaped out into the hall.

He knew that the redcoats would be after him very quickly.

He bounded along the hall in the direction of the stairway.

As it was dark in the hall, Dick had to slow up a bit.

He was afraid that he might fall downstairs and break his neck.

This would be as bad as to be killed by the redcoats.

It did not take Dick long to find the stairs, however.

He soon reached the landing.

The instant he was sure of his footing, he moved down the stairs quite rapidly.

As he did so he heard the sound of hurrying feet in the hall.

Excited cries and curses rent the air.

The officers were coming in pursuit.

Dick was soon at the bottom of the stairs.

Turning, Dick made his way back along the lower hall.

He moved as rapidly as possible.

Dick realized that he was in considerable danger.

Should the British officers succeed in capturing him, they would, in their present frame of mind, have no hesitancy in killing him.

Knowing this, Dick was determined that they should not catch him.

It did not take Dick long to reach the end of the hall.

He tried the door.

It was locked.

Dick then opened the door at the left and passed through into the room he had first entered when coming into the house.

The pursuing officers were now in the lower hallway.

They were coming back toward the rear as rapidly as possible, and were breathing curses and dire threats.

Dick quickly crossed the room.

He found the window still open.

He quickly climbed through the opening.

He did not delay an instant, but turning, ran rapidly across the yard.

As he reached the fence and climbed over it, he heard the excited voices of the officers and realized that they had discovered the open window.

Dick ran down the alley at full speed.

The officers heard him, and gave utterance to wild yell. They set out in pursuit.

"Jove!" thought Dick, "if they keep up that yelling, they will arouse all Newport, and it will be a difficult matter for me to escape."

He kept on running, however.

He wished to increase his lead as much as possible before the yells of the pursuing officers attracted the attention of people on the street.

Dick reached the street, and instead of turning up it he crossed it and continued down the next alley.

He had been seen, however, and a number started in pursuit.

The chase became lively.

Dick was a fleet runner, however, and gradually drew away from his pursuers.

It took him a quarter of an hour at least, but he finally shook his pursuers entirely off, and found himself alone in a distant part of the town.

Dick made his way to a tavern, and put up for the night. He was up bright and early next morning.

He ate a light breakfast, and, hiring a horse, rode away. He rode out of Newport, and away toward the north.

He rode steadily for three-quarters of an hour.

Then he stopped at a farmhouse and inquired the way to Morton's Tavern.

"It is jest a mile ahead uv ye, mister," was the reply, "keep right on, the way ye hev be'n goin', an' ye will soon git there."

"Thank you," said Dick.

Then he rode onward.

A ride of five minutes brought him to a tavern standing beside the road.

He dismounted, and, hitching his horse, entered.

It was yet early.

The sun had been up but a short time.

Dick asked if he could be served with breakfast.

The proprietor of the tavern said he could, and told Dick to go into the dining-room.

Dick did so.

While waiting for his breakfast to be served, Dick asked a few cautious questions.

He wished to secure all the information possible.

He found out how far it was to the encampment of the British.

He learned, also, that some British warships were usually anchored in the Middle Passage, just off the end of Prudence Island.

These things would be good to know, Dick realized.

With a perfect understanding of the situation, and a full knowledge regarding the lay of the land, the work of capturing the British commander, General Prescott, would be facilitated considerably.

When breakfast was served, Dick ate it, and then paying the score he went out, untied his horse, mounted, and rode away.

He rode on in the direction of the British encampment, which the tavern-keeper had said was a mile distant.

Dick drew rein on the top of a hill.

From here he could see the British encampment.

He sat on his horse and looked down upon the encampment for several minutes.

Presently he saw a stir in the encampment.

"I believe they have seen me," thought Dick. "I guess I had better get away from here. I've seen all I wish to, anyway."

Turning his horse's head in the other direction, Dick rode back down the hill and along the road in the direction from which he had just come.

Presently he left the main road, however, and bore away in the direction of the water front.

He wished to find a desirable landing place for the boats for use the coming night.

Dick was soon at the shore, and a few minutes' search enabled him to find a nice little cove which would afford a splendid landing place for boats.

The cove was about half a mile distant from Morton's Tavern.

Dick's work in this vicinity was now done.

Mounting his horse he rode away.

He rode in a diagonal line and struck the main road half mile south of the tavern.

He urged his horse into a gallop now, and rode rapidly in the direction of Newport.

Half an hour later he reached there.

He paid for the use of the horse and then made his way down toward the dock.

He went to the place where a man kept boats for hire.

Dick bargained with the man for the use of ten boats.

When a price had been agreed upon, Dick paid it and then said:

"I'll take one boat now. The rest of the boats, I wish brought over to the main land this evening at about nine o'clock."

"How'll I know whereabouts on the shore ter take ther boats?" the man asked.

"You'll see the light of a bonfire. Head straight for hat."

"All right."

Dick got into the boat, seized the oars and rowed away. An hour later Dick rounded the north end of Conanicut Island.

He rowed slowly and kept his eyes on the shore.

He watched closely, but did not see anything of the madman or his daughter.

Dick then headed over toward the main land.

An hour later he reached it.

The instant Dick reached shore he was surrounded by the "Liberty Boys."

They were glad to see their young commander back among them again, safe, sound and well.

They plied him with eager questions.

What had he accomplished?

Had he learned anything of value?

What luck had he had?

Had he seen General Prescott?

Was there any possible chance of making the British commander a prisoner?

Such were a few of the questions asked.

Dick waited smilingly till they were through.

Then he said:

"I think we have a splendid chance of making a prisoner of General Prescott, boys; if we have good luck and things go as I think they will, we will have the British commander in our clutches before midnight."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Estabrook.

"Hurrah!" cried the other "Liberty Boys" in chorus.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE.

The "Liberty Boys" were delighted by the thought that they would have a good chance to capture the British commander.

They asked Dick questions regarding the matter, and he explained everything.

They readily saw that there would indeed be a splendid opportunity for capturing General Prescott.

They were eager for nightfall to come so that they might get to work.

Night did come at last.

The youths had piled a lot of dead boughs and sticks together, and as soon as it was dark they set the stuff on fire.

It blazed up brightly.

"There; the boatman will be able to see that, I think," said Dick in a tone of satisfaction.

They waited as patiently as they could for nearly an hour, and then the sound of oars came to their ears.

The majority of the "Liberty Boys," in accordance with instructions from Dick, had retired into the timber, where they would be out of sight.

Dick did not wish them to be seen by the boatman.

He might return to Newport and report what he had seen, and it might create suspicion, and result in something being done which would prevent the youths from carrying out their purpose.

Presently the boatman from whom Dick had hired the boats put in an appearance.

He had the boats tied together in a string, and had towed them over from Newport.

He landed, and was greeted by Dick.

The boats were pulled up close to the shore and tied to trees, and then the boatman got back in his boat.

"Come here for the boats in the morning," said Dick.

"Very well," replied the boatman, and then with a "good-night," he rowed away.

Dick waited nearly half an hour after the boatman left before making any movement.

He feared the boatman, out of curiosity, might have stopped out a ways, and be watching.

The bonfire had now burned down pretty low, and Dick brought some water and threw on it and soon extinguished it.

"There," he thought, "now our movements will be veiled in darkness, and I think that the better and safer way."

Dick lost no more time.

He told the "Liberty Boys" to get into the boats, and they did so.

Then he took the lead, telling the others to follow.

The youths obeyed, and soon the little fleet was moving slowly through the water.

There were ten youths in each boat, which was quite a load.

"We have all night for it, fellows," said Dick, "so we can afford to take our own time."

"I'm glad of that," said Bob, who was in the next boat back of the one Dick was in; "this rowing business isn't as easy as it might be."

It took the "Liberty Boys" nearly three hours to row across to the point Dick was aiming for—the little cove near Morton's Tavern.

It was reached at last, however, and the youths leaped ashore and tied their boats to trees.

Then Dick took the lead, and they moved away, inland.

It was a walk of but a few minutes to the tavern.

It was now nearly midnight.

Dick judged that the tavern would be dark, and that the inmates would be in bed and sound asleep.

Such, however, was not the case.

The tavern was lighted up, and the youths, when they had drawn near, could hear the sound of talk and laugh.

Dick listened for a few moments.

"A party is sitting up in the barroom, playing cards and drinking," he said to Bob; "and I believe General Prescott is one of the members of the party."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Bob.

Dick decided to proceed on this theory.

He ordered the "Liberty Boys" to surround the tavern. They did so.

When this had been accomplished, Dick, at the head of a party of six of the youths, stepped to the door, and, pushing it open, entered.

A party of four was seated at the side of the barroom playing cards.

So interested were they in their game that at first they did not notice the newcomers.

The youths had advanced to within a few feet of the players, and Dick had pointed out General Prescott to his comrades before their presence was discovered.

Then the British commander happened to glance up. His eyes fell upon Dick.

He recognized the youth at once as being the person who had bumped his head against the wall, and who had been hidden in the closet in his room the night before.

"The Quaker again!" General Prescott cried, and leaped to his feet and started to draw his sword.

"Hold!" cried Dick, in a stern, ringing voice, "if you draw that sword, you will get yourself into trouble! We want you! Step out here and give yourself up peacefully or it will be the worse for you!"

The British commander stared at Dick in startled amazement.

"You want me?" he asked.

"We do!"

"What folly!" growled the man. "I am General Prescott and am not to be ordered about by such as you."

"I know you are General Prescott," was Dick's cool reply; "that is the reason we want you. You are our prisoner!"

"Your prisoner!"

The British officer stared in open-mouthed amazement. Then he burst into a loud laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he roared. "This is a good joke! General Prescott a prisoner! Your prisoner! Ha! ha! ha!"

"You will find it no joke," said Dick, calmly. "I mean what I say. Will you give up peaceably, or shall we use force?"

The British commander began to look sober now.

"Who and what are you?" he asked, looking at Dick searchingly.

"I am Dick Slater, captain of the 'Liberty Boys of twenty-six,'" was the quiet reply.

General Prescott had heard of Dick and his "Liberty boys."

He gave utterance to a gasping exclamation and turned pale.

"Dick Slater! The 'Liberty Boys'!" he said, as if hardly willing to credit his hearing.

"The same," replied Dick; "and we have come for you. Up with your hands!"

The British commander hesitated.

He glanced at the half dozen youths, and then at his three companions. Two of them were British officers, the other being the tavern-keeper.

"I will not surrender to such a paltry force!" the man cried. "I will——"

"You are very foolish," interrupted Dick; "there are one hundred of us here. The tavern is surrounded. You cannot escape!"

General Prescott did not believe this, however, and started to draw his sword.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" leaped forward.

He was seized and made a prisoner in a twinkling, Dick standing and holding a pair of levelled pistols, and thus forcing the other two British officers to sit still.

Dick hardly knew what to do regarding those two.

He did not know whether to take them along, prisoners, or not.

He finally decided to leave them behind.

They would be a good deal of trouble, as there were no extra horses for them to ride, and it was a long trip back to the Hudson River.

Prescott was the one wanted, and Dick decided that they would be satisfied with him and leave the others.

He warned them not to leave the tavern during the next hour, however, under pain of death.

"I shall leave a number of men on guard outside," he said, "and if you attempt to leave the place you will be not dead!"

The officers were frightened.

"We will remain inside the tavern," said one.

"Yes, indeed!" from the other.

"See that you do!"

Then Dick gave the signal, and the youths marched General Prescott out of the tavern.

The entire party now moved away in the direction of the water front.

They had not gone more than half way, however, before the sound of yelling and pistol shots came from the direction of the tavern.

The officers had discovered in some manner that there was no one on guard over them and were raising an alarm.

"They will have a crowd of redcoats from the encampment after us very quickly," said Dick. "I did not think they would have the courage to stick their heads outside the door."

"We should have brought them along, Dick," said Bob.

"They would have been more trouble than they were worth, Bob."

The party now hastened onward as rapidly as possible.

It did not take long to reach the point where the boats had been left.

General Prescott was placed in the boat in which Dick expected to ride, and when all had taken their places the boats were pushed off.

They had gone but a little distance when they became aware that they were threatened by a great danger.

The British warships lay just off shore, and the sound of the pistol shots at the tavern had been heard on board the ships.

Lights appeared, and the youths could hear the sound of hurrying feet on the ships' decks.

"We will have to give those ships a wide berth," said Dick, and he gave the order to head down the shore until well away from the vicinity.

This was done.

The boats moved down along the shore a distance of a mile, at least, and then they headed in a southwesterly direction, it being Dick's aim to just miss the north end of Conanicut Island.

This they succeeded in doing, and by four o'clock in the morning they had made a landing on the mainland.

They had some difficulty in finding the right place, but did finally do so.

They tied the boats securely, and then made their way to where their horses were, and, mounting, rode away in triumph, with General Prescott in their midst.

They rode till daylight, and paused at an old inn for breakfast.

It took a couple of hours for all to eat, and during that time the news had spread throughout the village that the British commander of Newport had been captured.

A great crowd collected, eager to see the prisoner.

Of course, they could not enter the inn, so they waited outside.

Dick did not delay an instant, but as soon as all had eaten, they came forth, mounted and rode away.

The people stared at General Prescott as if he were some animal on exhibition, and the "Liberty Boys" were regarded with considerable interest, also.

Dick, fearing that they might be pursued, ordered that they ride at a gallop, and this was done.

The swift pace was kept up till noon, and they paused in another village, for dinner.

Dick began to breathe freely, now.

He did not believe the redcoats even if they had come in pursuit, could overtake his party now.

After dinner they mounted and rode onward.

They rode till late that evening and paused at a village of goodly size.

They were now well over into Connecticut.

Dick felt that they would be safe in remaining here over night.

He gave orders that all should rise early, next morning, however.

They were away again by sunrise, and rode steadily onward till noon.

They stopped at a tavern, in a small village, and had dinner, and then continued on again.

They were out only one more night, and about the middle of the next afternoon they arrived at the patriot encampment on the Hudson River.

The arrival of the "Liberty Boys" with General Prescott a prisoner in their midst, was the occasion of great excitement among the soldiers and officers.

They were eager to hear all about it.

General Washington sent for Dick at once.

He greeted the youth, warmly.

"Well, you succeeded, after all, Dick!" he exclaimed.
"You captured General Prescott!"

"Yes, your excellency."

He gave a history of the affair, in detail, modestly refraining from mentioning his own achievements any more than was absolutely necessary.

The commander-in-chief could read between the lines, however.

He knew that Dick had played the part of a hero while away.

"You have done a good thing in capturing this man Prescott," said General Washington; "he is a tyrant, and has made life a terror by night and by day to the citizens of Newport."

"I don't think he will do so any more, your excellency," said Dick, quietly.

"Not soon, at any rate," with a smile.

At the end of the interview, General Washington went his desk, opened a drawer and drew forth a bag, the contents of which chinked musically as he walked back where Dick sat.

"Here, Dick, is the twenty pounds which I offered as prize for the capture of General Prescott. I will write the letter to Congress at once, as I promised."

Dick placed his hands behind him and shook his head.

"I don't want the gold, your excellency," he said.

"Take it!" insisted the commander-in-chief; "take and divide it among your brave 'Liberty Boys'."

Again Dick shook his head.

"No," he said, "we want no gold. The prize which we are all working for is your good opinion. If we have done anything to earn that, I am glad, and my boys will be glad also. We have done only our duty, and I am sure I speak for all when I say that we would much rather leave the gold in your hands to be used as you see fit, and as will best benefit the great cause for which we all are fighting."

"Nobly spoken!" said the commander-in-chief. "I will retain the gold and use it for the best interests of the cause, as you suggest, and as for the other part, I will say that I shall always have a warm spot in my heart for Dick Slater and his brave 'Liberty Boys.'"

"The knowledge of that fact will give us more pleasure than anything else could possible do, your excellency!" said Dick, earnestly. "And I will say that whenever you have any difficult and dangerous work, we shall be only too glad to attempt to do the work. Don't fail to call upon us when you need us."

"I shall know where to go, so long as you and your 'Liberty Boys' are where I can get at you, Dick!" with a smile.

THE END.

The next number (38) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' PLOT; OR, THE PLAN THAT WON," by Harry Moore.

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